An EXPLANATION OF THE ROMAN CATHOLICKS BELIEF,

Concerning Their *Church*, *Worship*, *Iustification*, *and civil Government* and their other Tenets:

As it was presented to some persons of Quality, for their particular satisfaction.

Anno Dom. 1656.

An Explanation of the *Roman Catholicks* Belief, concerning Their *Church*, *Worship*, *Iustification*, *civil Government*, and their other Tenets:

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WE believe the holy *Scriptures* to be of Divine inspiration and infallible Authority; and whatsoever is therein contained we firmly assent unto, as the Word of God, the Authour of all Truth. I.

But since in the holy Scriptures there are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unstable wrest to their own destruction; we therefore profesſe (for the ending of controversies in our Religion, and setling of peace in our Consciences) to submit our private judgments to the Judgement of the Church, represented in a free Generall Councell. 2 Pet. 3. 16.

2, We humbly believe the sacred Mysterie of the *Blessed Trinity*, one Eternall, II.

Almighty, and incomprehenſible God whom onely we adore and worſhip, as a lone having Soveraigne Dominion over all things, to whom onely, we acknowledge as due from men and Angels, all glory, ſervice, and obedience (abhorring from our hearts, as a moſt deteſtable Sacriledge, to give our Creatours honour to any Creature whatſoever.

1. Tim. 1.17.

And therefore we ſolemnly proteſt, that by the prayers we addreſſe to *Angels* and *Saints*, we intend no other than humbly to ſollicite their aſſiſtance before the Throne of God, as we deſire the prayers of one another here upon earth, not that we hope any thing from them, as original Authours thereof, but from God the Fountain of all Goodneſſe, through *Ieſus Chriſt*, our onely Mediatour and Redeemer.

Neither do we believe any divinity or virtue to be in *Images*, for which they ought to be worſhip't, as the *Gentiles* did their *Idols*, but we retain them with due and decent reſpect in our Churches, as inſtruments, which we finde by experience, do often aſſiſt our memories, and excite our affections.

III. 3. We firmly believe, that no force of nature

nature nor dignity of our beſt works can merit our *Iuſtification*, but we are ju- Rom. 3. ſtified freely by *grace*, through the Re- 14. demption that is in *Ieſus Chriſt*.

And although we ſhould by the grace of God perſevere unto the end in a godly life and holy obedience to the Commandements; yet are our hopes of eternall glory ſtill built upon the mercy of God, and the merits of *Chriſt Ieſus*.

All other *merits* (according to our ſenſe of that word) ſignifie no more, than Actions done by the aſſiſtance of Gods grace, to which it has pleaſed his goodneſſe to promiſe a reward; a Doctrine ſo farre from being unſuitable to the ſenſe of the holy Scriptures, that it is their principall deſign to invite and provoke us to a diligent obſervance of the *Commandements*, by promiſing heaven as the reward of our obedience, 1 *Tim.* 4. 8. Godlineſſe is profitable to all things, having the *promiſe* of this life, and of that which is to come, And *Rom.* 2. 6. God will render to every man according to his deeds, to them, who by patient confidence in well-doing, ſeek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternall life. And again, *Rom.* 8. 3. If you live after the fleſh you ſhall die, but if through

the ſpirit you mortifie the deeds of the bodie; *you ſhall live*, And *Heb.6.* 10. God is not unjuſt to forget your work and labour of love, which you have ſhewed for his name, &c, Nothing being ſo frequently repeated in the Word of God, as his gracious promiſes to recompenſe with everlaſting glory the faith and obedience of his ſervants; Nor is the bounty of God barely according to our works, but high and plentifull, even beyond our capacities, giving full meaſure, heaped up, preſſed down, and running over into the boſomes of all that love him.

Luke 6. 38.

Thus we believe the merit or rewardableneſſe of holy living (both which ſignifie the ſame thing with us) ariſes not from the ſelf-value even of our beſt actions, as they are ours, but from the Grace and Bounty of God; and for our ſelves, we ſincerely profeſſe, when we have done all thoſe things, which are commanded us, we are unprofitable ſervants, having done nothing but that which was our duty, ſo that our boaſting is not in our ſelves, but all our glorying is in *Chriſt*.

Luke 17. 10.

IV. 4. In the holy Euchariſt, or moſt venerable Sacrament of the body and bloud of our Lord: We acknowledge that there are

are, as in all other Sacraments, two things. The visible signe, which is the forms of bread and wine, to which noe Catholick may or doth direct his worship. There is also invisible Grace signified, the body of our blessed Lord, whom being present we adore and worship with all possible reverence and thanksgiving from our hearts for so great a blessing, warranted herein by our blessed Lord himself in each of the Gospels.

5. We humbly confesse that from the beginning of Christianity, the holy Communion was administred *frequently* in both, & *sometimes* in each kind, according to severall circumstances: and hence the holy Church following the piety of Christians, who insensibly became accustomed to receive it almost universally in one kinde, upon great motives did afterwards ordain to have it in one, as now it is commonly administred, though the receiving of it so is not matter of faith. Neither do we believe that religious and devout communicants, are hereby bereaved of any benefit or comfort in obeying the Churches orders, since our holy belief instructs us, that our blessed Lord the fountain of all grace is as e- V. *Trid. sess.* 21. *c.* 2. 3

qually present in one kinde as in both.

VI. 6. The holy Sacrifice indeed of the altar we clearly believe ought to be celebrated in both kinds, as now it is according to the divine institution, as being done in representation and commemoration of our Lords blessed passion on the crosse, wherein the body and bloud were separated: Whatsoever therefore propitiatory power our holy Religion attributes to this commemorative Sacrifice, it is by virtue of the Sacrifice of the crosse, as being by this applied to us. This is the substance of our faith expressed in the Councell of Trent, so that still we humbly acknowledge the ground of our salvatlon to be derived from our Lords blessed and bitter passion.

Luk. 21. 9.

Sef. 22. c. 1.

VII. 7. We freely acknowledge that it is no way commanded by the Church, that the people should pray in a language which they understand not, nay, there is given them all possible incouragement to encrease their devotions, and with the Apostle to allure all, if it may be, to continuall prayer, (which is the life of our souls) by ordaining and publishing most excellent prayers in vulgar languages for their use. As

As to the lyturgies [illegible] of the Church properly belong to Church-men, and therefore were anciently ſtyled the Prieſts books, leſt the people ſhould not receive full benefit by their publick uſe, there is an expreſſe command of our holy mother the Church in the Councell of Trent, that the Paſtours and all who have charge of ſouls, in the very time of divine ſervice, ſhould expound and make them plain to the peoples capacity, as in the old times of the Church we find it was alſo ordained and practiſed. *which* *Seſ. 5. c. 8.*

VIII. Our faith teacheth us to exerciſe Chriſtian Charity by humbling our ſelves before the divine throne of Gods mercy, to begg forgiveneſſe (as we dō for one another here upon earth) of the debts and treſpaſſes of thoſe middle ſort of Chriſtians, as S. *Auguſtine* and the Councel of Florence call them, who had not brought forth ſufficient fruits of repentance, dying in communion of the faithfull; which indigent condition of theirs, relievable by the Churches, or the prayers of the faithfull ſurviving, ſpeaks what the ancient call Purgatory: warranted herein by the practiſe under the law recorded and recommended in the Maccabees, which being *In Enchyridio ad Laurentium & De Civ. l. 21. c. 24.*

being in no sort reprehended by our Lord or his Apostles amongst the rest of the Jews unlawfull practises, was and is justly presumed to have been allowed by *him*, as many of the Fathers understood his sermon in the Mount, and by *them*, as is hinted by S. *Paul*: whereupon it hath continued ever since in generall practise throughout all ages, as even gravestones and all other Christian monuments do witnesse especially all ancient Lyturgies of the Saints, and books of common prayers used in all Churches: neither can we decern how possibly this may be conceived offensive to God, whose justice herein we hope and do humbly endeavour to appease by our exercise of brotherly compassion.

Mat. 5. 29. 1 Cor. 15. 29. 2 Cor. 3.

IX. 9. We firmly believe, and highly reverence the *Moral Law*, being so solemnly delivered to *Moses* upon the Mount, so expressly confirmed by our Saviour in the Gospel, and containing in it self so perfect an Abridgement of our whole duty both to God and man.

Exod. 20. Mat. 19. Eccles. 12. 13.

Which *Morall Law* we believe obliges all men to proceed with faithfulnesse and sincerity in their mutuall contracts one towards another; and therefore our constant

stant Profession is, that we are most strictly and absolutely bound to the exact and entire performance of our promises, made to any person of what Religion soever; much more to the Magistrates and Civil Powers, under whose protection we live, whom we are taught by the Word of God to obey, not onely for fear, but conscience sake; and to whom we will most faithfully observe our promises of duty and obedience, notwithstanding any dispensation, absolution, or other proceedings of any forraign Power or Authority whatsoever,

Wherefore we utterly deny and renounce that false and scandalous position, that *Faith is not to be kept with Hereticks*, as most uncharitably imputed to our practises, and most unjustly pinned upon our Religion.

These we sincerely and solemnly professe, as in the sight of God, the searcher of all hearts, taking the words plainly and simply, in their usuall and familiar sense, without any Equivocation or Mentall Reservation whatsoever.